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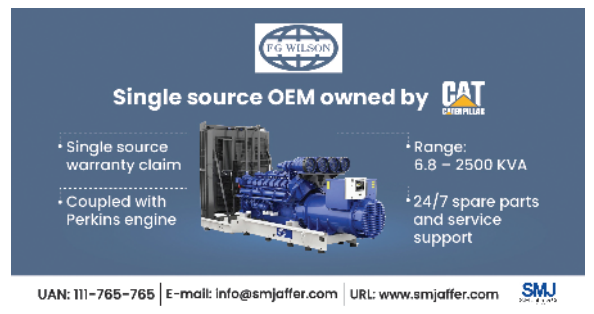
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NA committee reprimands PTA over slow internet

Telecom sector regulator ordered to conduct comprehensive surveys and present a detailed report

By Kalbe Ali

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary committee on Tuesday took notice of the nationwide slowdown in internet services and reprimanded the telecom sector regulator over the issue.

At its meeting, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on IT and Telecom directed the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to conduct comprehensive nationwide surveys and take immediate practical steps to ensure fast and reliable internet services across the country.

Committee chairman Syed Amin ul Haq instructed the relevant officials to conduct special surveys through PTA teams to assess the quality of internet services being provided to the public, and to present a detailed report at the committee's next meeting.

Briefing the committee, PTA officials said that 273 MHz spectrum was currently available in the country, but it was insufficient to meet the rising demand for high-speed internet. They added that the government plans to auction 600 MHz of spectrum across various bands, with the process now moving towards the rollout of 5G.

While reviewing progress of the Islamabad IT Park project, the committee was informed that the consultant's contract had expired on Oct 31. The contractor has initiated the renewal process, which is expected to be finalised shortly.

The NA panel emphasised that the project must meet the timeline set by the prime minister — Dec 31, 2025.

Regarding the Karachi IT Park, the committee noted that the project remains in its initial stages and that the contract is expected to be awarded soon.

A delegation from South Korea is scheduled to visit on December 2 to finalise the remaining matters related to the contract award.

The committee directed officials to award the contract without further delay so that work can begin promptly, emphasising that the project must be completed within the stipulated two-year period.

The panel was also briefed by the managing director of the National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) on the company's future initiatives, including secure mobile connectivity for government officials and the establishment of new data centres in Karachi and Quetta.

The panel was told that these initiatives are part of a broader strategic plan aimed at enhancing cybersecurity and expanding reliable IT and telecom services for public sector institutions.

The committee appreciated NTC's performance and acknowledged that the organisation's ongoing projects were satisfactory. It advised NTC to refrain from downsizing and instead adopt a rightsizing approach to ensure no employee is laid off, and that staff members are appropriately adjusted and placed where their services are genuinely required.

The committee deferred the Prevention of Obscenity and Indecency in Digital Media Bill, 2025, to the next meeting due to the absence of the bill's mover.

FOREIGN Minister Ishaq Dar shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin.— X / ForeignOfficePk

Dar meets Putin, Li Qiang on SCO sidelines

Dawn Report

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday met with senior Russian and Chinese leadership at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government summit, according to the Foreign Office (FO).

Taking place under Russia's rotating presidency, the high-level meeting follows the landmark Tianjin summit three months earlier and comes at a pivotal moment for Eurasian economic connectivity in a shifting global order.

At the heads of government gathering, Mr Dar met Russian President Vladimir Putin, along with other SCO heads of state and senior officials. In a post on X, the FO said that Putin welcomed leaders to the summit in the Russian capital.

He also "emphasised the importance of strengthening regional economic cooperation under the SCO, highlighting its role as a key platform for connectivity, stability, and mutually beneficial development across the region".

Mr Dar also met Chinese Premier Li Qiang, where the pair "reaffirmed the 'all-weather' Pakistan-China strategic partnership, reviewed bilateral and multilateral cooperation — especially within the SCO — and praised the Shanghai Spirit principles guiding regional collaboration".

The post added that the FMs exchanged views on global issues and agreed to "maintain real-time engagement moving forward."

He also had a bilateral meeting with Russian Deputy PM Alexei Overchuk on the sidelines of the summit, the FO said in another post.

Additionally, Mr Dar met Russian FM Sergei Lavrov on the sidelines of the Moscow summit, with photographs showing the pair embracing each other.

During his address earlier in the day, Mr Dar said the SCO was "well-placed" to promote regional cooperation in the humanitarian field to deal with emergencies.

"Pakistan has developed a technology-driven, proactive disaster management system," he pointed out, adding that the country is "keen" to organise simulation exercises with SCO partners to bolster disaster preparedness across the region.

Rejection of contempt plea against jail officials assailed

IHC erred by disposing of case without looking at record, says Salman Akram Raja

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Senior counsel Salman Akram Raja on Tuesday approached the Supreme Court to challenge the Oct 23 decision of the Islamabad High Court rejecting his contempt petition which he earlier filed against Adiala jail officials to seek enforcement of IHC's directives on visitation rights of PTI founder Imran Khan with his legal team.

In an appeal moved under Article 185 of the Constitution, Salman Akram Raja, who is also PTI's Secretary General, stated that the IHC while disposing of his contempt petition relied solely on oral assertion of the Adiala jail superintendent regarding alleged compliance with previous judicial directions.

The petitioner pleaded that the IHC failed to call for the relevant record to verify with the jail authorities about the implementation of earlier directions for making arrangements for regular meetings with Imran Khan at the Adiala jail. This constitutes a miscarriage of justice and a failure to exercise constitutional jurisdiction under Article 199 of the Constitution, the petition contended.

The petitioner argued that IHC failed to appreciate that its own previous judgment of March 24 had conferred a clear and unambiguous direction regarding visitation rights of the founding PTI chairman with his legal team and nominated coordinators, and that executive authorities were legally bound to comply with judicial orders unless modified or set aside by a superior forum.

The right of a prisoner to consult and communicate with his legal counsel is an integral part of Articles 4, 9, 10, and 10-A of the Constitution, which guarantee protection of law, liberty, fair trial, and due process, the petitioner stated, adding the high court while disposing of the matter on administrative grounds failed to safeguard these fundamental and inviolable rights.

The high court misapplied Rule 265 of the Pakistan Prison Rules, 1978, without examining whether its rigid application is consistent with constitutional guarantees. These rules, being subordinate legislation, cannot override or restrict fundamental rights or judicial orders issued under Article 199 of the Constitution, the appeal argued.

Moreover, the high court also failed to appreciate that the administrative discretion of jail authorities is subject to judicial supervision, the petition argued, adding by directing strict adherence to the jail manual without enforcing previous judicial orders, the high court effectively allowed executive non-compliance to override judicial authority, contrary to the doctrine of separation of powers.

The petition contended that the high court erred in law as it disposed of the petition summarily, without examining the record of multiple prior instances of non-compliance brought on the file, thereby failing to apply judicial mind and rendering the order mechanical, perfunctory, and devoid of reasoning.

Thus, the high court order resulted in a grave miscarriage of justice, as it deprived the petitioner and PTI founder of their rights to effective legal representation, consultation, and coordination in ongoing legal proceedings across the country.

The order also frustrates the principle of judicial supremacy, as it allows executive authorities to neutralize the effect of court orders through oral statements, the petitioner regretted.

The high court also failed to exercise its supervisory and coercive jurisdiction vested under Article 204 of the Constitution to ensure implementation of its previous orders and to hold the respondents accountable for continued defiance. Instead, it chose to dispose of the petition, and rendering the earlier judicial directions ineffective.

The Supreme Court has consistently held that when the high court declines to exercise jurisdiction vested in it by law, or misinterprets the scope of its powers under Article 199, such refusal constitutes an error of law justifying the grant of leave to appeal, the petition maintained.

Aleem inspects M-5 repair work, orders restoration by 30th

By Syed Irfan Raza

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Tuesday visited Motorway M-5 at Jalalpur Pirwala to inspect the ongoing restoration and repair works initiated after the recent floods, and directed one-way traffic restoration on the busy highway for the traffic by Nov 30.

"One way traffic restoration must be ensured by November 30 on Motorway M-5 and inconvenience faced by commuters should be brought to an end immediately," Mr Khan was quoted as saying by an official press release issued by the Ministry of Communications after the visit.

The minister reviewed the progress of the rehabilitation activities and issued strict instructions to the National Highway Authority (NHA) officials to ensure top quality and timely completion of all repair works.

He warned NHA officers that substandard work will not be tolerated under any circumstances. He instructed authorities concerned to submit a detailed progress report within one week, adding that he would personally conduct a follow-up visit to review the developments.

Mr Khan also inspected the rest houses and roadside facilities along the M-5 Motorway.

Expressing dissatisfaction over poor arrangements, he reprimanded NHA officials concerned and stressed that negligence and inefficiency would not be tolerated. He also directed officials concerned to ensure clean and well-maintained restrooms, properly stocked tuck shops and other essential passenger services.

"It is the right of every traveller to get top quality facilities," he said, adding that people were more willing to pay taxes when they receive reliable and adequate public services in return.

The minister reiterated that the Ministry of Communications was committed to making Motorway M-5 safer, more comfortable and fully operational as soon as possible.

Earlier, NHA officials briefed the minister on the current status of repair and rehabilitation activities underway at Jalalpur Pirwala.

JALALPUR PIRWALA: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan visits the M-5 motorway to inspect repair work after floods.—APP

District Vulnerability Index launched

Aurangzeb calls for addressing rapid population growth and climate vulnerability

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb has said the country's long-term economic prospects depend on effectively confronting the dual national challenges of rapid population growth and climate vulnerability.

He made the observation while addressing the launching ceremony of the District Vulnerability Index for Pakistan (DVIP), organised by the Population Council in collaboration with the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO).

The finance minister said the impacts of high population growth are visible in persistent human development challenges, including child stunting, learning poverty and a workforce insufficiently equipped for the future.

He commended the Population Council for producing a comprehensive, data-driven District Vulnerability Index based on three years of research. He emphasised that the index provides actionable management information through its detailed analysis across six domains, offering meaningful insights into geographic disparities and identifying districts most at risk, particularly in Balochistan and Sindh.

The findings illustrate how social vulnerabilities and climate exposure reinforce each other, creating compounded risks for already marginalised populations.

The finance minister affirmed his ministry's commitment to supporting national efforts in population and climate-related policymaking by integrating these priorities into budgeting and resource allocation.

Addressing the gathering, Minister for Climate Change Dr Musadik Masood Malik highlighted the human dimension of the DVIP's findings. He stressed the need to reduce regional disparities by increasing resource allocation to vulnerable districts, following principles of equity.

Discussing the reasons for persistent structural vulnerability, he recommended revising the NFC Award formula, which currently rewards large populations. Instead, he proposed alternative criteria that encourage social sector advancement and poverty reduction.

Introducing the DVIP, Population Council's Country Director Dr Zeba Sathar said: "The District Vulnerability Index offers a powerful lens into the multifaceted nature of vulnerability across Pakistan. By pinpointing where and how people are most at risk, it provides essential guidance for directing public resources, reducing disparities, and building resilience against future shocks."

Sam Waldock, Development Director at the FCDO, reminded the gathering that socio-economic vulnerability in Pakistan is not insurmountable and can be overcome if effectively prioritised.

Karachi woman gets 8 years for lying about terrorist acts

Justice Dept says Kahkashan Haider collected money from MQM sympathisers in US, wired funds to Pakistan to pay for attacks on fuel pumps

By Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: A woman in the Texas town of Frisco has been sentenced to eight years in prison for making false statements about alleged terrorist acts in Karachi.

In a statement released by the US Justice Department, acting US Attorney in the Eastern District of Texas, Jay R. Combs, identified the woman as 54-year-old Kahkashan Haider Khan.

The Justice Department stated that Kahkashan had pleaded guilty to making false statements in relation to international terrorism and was sentenced to 96 months in federal prison by US District Judge Amos L. Mazzant III.

"We will not allow the United States to be a launching point for terrorist attacks abroad," said Mr Combs.

"Vigilantly protecting the United States and its interests is inherent in everything we do. This includes aggressively prosecuting those who wrongly believe that they can find safe harbor in the United States while plotting crimes elsewhere."

"The FBI will aggressively investigate individuals planning or taking part in acts of violence in support of terrorism. We take these crimes seriously and will work with our international partners to hold perpetrators accountable," said FBI Dallas Special Agent in Charge R. Joseph Rothrock.

According to information presented in court, on February 23, 2023, Kahkashan was interviewed by Special Agents from the FBI regarding her involvement in the planned fire-bombing of two gas stations in Karachi.

The Justice Department identified Kahkashan, a US citizen and immigrant from Pakistan, as "a member of a separatist movement in Pakistan known as the Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), which claims grievances against the Pakistani government over the treatment of muhajir immigrants in Pakistan."

It may be recalled that this was the old moniker of the Muttahidda Qaumi Movement (MQM), which changed its name in 1997. Another fracture in the mid-2010s had led to the creation of two distinct factions: the MQM-London, led by Altaf Hussain, and MQM-Pakistan.

In a March 2021 press conference, CTD and Rangers officials had accused Kahkashan of plotting the assassination of various personalities to trigger sectarian violence and spread chaos in Karachi.

At the time, then CTD-DIG Omar Shahid Hamid had described her as an MQM-London activist and a close aide of Altaf Hussain, and accused her of establishing target killers' groups in collaboration with India's RAW and anti-Pakistan Sindhi and Baloch groups to target law enforcement agencies, police, political and religious leaders.

In a statement issued after the Justice Department announcement, MQM-P admitted that Kahkashan had been a member, but claimed she had been removed "many years ago" for what the party described as "repeated violations of organisational discipline".

Planning attacks

The Justice Department maintained that Kahkashan "served as a recruiter and facilitator of terrorist actions in Pakistan by collecting funds, sending them to Pakistan, and arranging and paying for violent actions in Pakistan."

The department reported that in January 2023, Kahkashan recruited an individual in Pakistan to conduct fire-bombings on two Punjabi-owned gas stations in Karachi.

Kahkashan discussed multiple aspects of the plan with her co-conspirator in Pakistan, including selecting the target locations, discussing which flammable accelerants to use, where to stage before the attacks, how to escape after the attacks, and arranging for the purchase of two firearms to be used by the attackers to ensure their success, the statement added.

The department claimed that Kahkashan collected money from MQM sympathisers in the United States and wired the funds to Pakistan to pay for the attacks.

The details show that on February 20, 2023, Kahkashan's co-conspirator in Pakistan sent her photos from news coverage of a fire-bombing of a Karachi gas station caused by attackers throwing something from a vehicle, resulting in six people being burned.

Kahkashan "celebrated the news and told her Pakistani co-conspirator that he would be greatly rewarded for his work. Throughout that day, February 20, 2023, Kahkashan scoured the internet for news in Pakistan regarding the fire-bombing but could find none."

After approximately one day of searching, she discovered that the photos her co-conspirator sent were from an event that occurred in October 2022. Kahkashan "was furious and accused her co-conspirator of deceit and being a disgrace to the MQM movement," the Justice Department noted.

On February 23, 2024, FBI Special Agents interviewed Kahkashan at her home about these events. During the interview, she made multiple false statements about the events and lied about her involvement in the attempted attacks.

Kahkashan denied that she wanted a co-conspirator to commit the fire-bombings in Pakistan. She denied that she was involved in an action in Pakistan that would possibly result in someone's harm or death.

During her plea hearing in February 2025, she admitted that these were false statements made knowing that the statements were material to a terrorism investigation.